The present invention relates in general to dispensers for postage stamps and, more particularly, to a device for dispensing and moistening the adhesive coated sides of postage stamps in strip form, such a postage stamp strip being coiled into a roll and having transverse rows of perforations which separate the stamps and which facilitate detaching the stamps from the strip.

In general, the invention contemplates a postage stamp dispenser comprising a housing having therein a chamber for he roll of stamps and having therein a discharge passageway for the strip unwound from the roll, such passageway having an inlet end in communication with the roll chamber and an outlet end formed in and extending through an external wall of the housing and communicating with the exterior of the housing. In a dispenser of this type, one wall of the passageway is provided with a window therein for access to the strip, the user propelling the strip through the passageway to discharge successive stamps through the outlet end of the passageway by means of a thumb or finger inserted through the window into engagement with the strip.

An important object of the invention is to provide a dispenser of the foregoing type wherein the passageway for the strip is of accurate cross section and is progressively more accurate in cross section from the inlet end of the passageway to the outlet end thereof. Such accurate passageway has the effect of curling the stamp strip transversely thereof to stiffen the strip so that it will not buckle in response to a force applied to the strip to move it through the passageway, or in response to forces applied to the strip in moistening the adhesive coated sides of the stamps, or in detaching the stamps from the strip, as will be described hereinafter.

Another object of the invention is to provide means for cutting the stamps from the strip along the transverse rows of perforations separating the stamps, comprising a knife disposed on the concave side of the passageway and slidable across the outlet end of the passageway so that the knife will cut the strip along such other row of perforations. -

The foregoing registering or indexing means for the strip provides a tactile response, the user being able to determine by feel when a row of perforations on the wall of the passageway opposite the windowed wall thereof. Another object is to provide, externally of the housing, on the windowed wall of the passageway, and adjacent the window therein, a transverse row of projections aligned with each transverse row of perforations on the opposite wall of the passageway. With this arrangement, the user can observe visually also that the strip is properly indexed by visually aligning a transverse row of perforations in the strip with a transverse row of projections on the exterior of the housing adjacent the window in the passageway.

A further object is to provide the wall of the passageway opposite the windowed wall thereof with longitudinal ribs thereon engageable by the strip. With this construction, the strip is slidable on the longitudinal ribs mentioned as it is moved through the passageway by the user's thumb or finger inserted through the window, the ribs minimizing the area of contact with the strip to minimize friction.

Still another object of the invention is to provide a housing which includes two pivotally interconnected housing members, one a base member providing for the roll of stamps and the other a cover member providing the discharge passageway for the strip.

Yet another object is to provide a construction wherein in the knife is carried by the cover member of the housing and slides across the outlet end of the passageway to cut the strip upon pivoting of the cover and base members toward each other.

Another object is to provide a dispenser wherein the base and cover members are biased apart by spring means engaging same, a related object being to provide a construction wherein the spring means and the knife are integral and, more particularly, a construction wherein the spring means is a U-shaped leaf spring one end of which forms the knife.

Still another object of the invention is to provide a postage stamp dispenser which includes a moistening device or means mounted on the housing external to the outlet end of the passageway so that the adhesive coated side of each stamp is moistened as it is discharged from the outlet end of the passageway.

An important object is to provide a moistening device which includes a moistening element having a moistening surface aligned with the outlet end of the passageway and sloping outwardly away from the outlet end of the passageway and toward the path of the strip as it is moved through the outlet end of the passageway. With this construction, the adhesive coated side of the strip engages an inclined surface to prevent jamming by abutting the end of the strip against the moistening element.

Another object is to provide a moistening surface which is arcurate to conform to the arcurate configuration of the adhesive coated side of the strip which is created by arcuate passageway.

An important object of the invention is to provide a dispenser wherein the base and cover members are pivotally connected by pins on one of the members slidable into slots in the other at one end of the housing and wherein the moistening device serves to hold the base and cover members in assembled relation at the other end of the housing in such a manner that the pins are retained in the slots mentioned by the moistening device.

More particularly, an important object of the invention is to provide the base member with pins disposed in slots in the cover member which have closed ends engageable by the pins and which slope from their closed
ends to their open ends generally toward the moistening device at the opposite end of the housing so that, when the moistening device is in place, it prevents withdrawal of the strip from the slots.

Another object is to provide the moistening device with a locking means which is insertable into openings in the base and cover members to hold these members in assembled relation in a manner to prevent withdrawal of the pins of the pivot means from the slots thereof.

Another object is to provide a construction wherein the base member opening in which the locking means on the moistening device is disposed is a slot in which the locking means is movable to permit pivoting of the base and cover members toward and away from each other to actuate the knife for cutting the strip.

Another object is to provide the moistening device which includes a water container carried by the locking means and disposed within a compartment or chamber in the base member adjacent the roll chamber therein, the water container communicating with the moistening element of the moistening device to maintain same in a moist condition.

A further object of the invention is to provide a dispensing device wherein the moistening means includes a head, a moistening element carried by the head, and an elongated, handle-like water container connected to the head and communicating with the moistening element, the water container forming a handle by means of which the moistening device may be grasped to permit its use independently of the remaining components of the dispenser.

Yet another object of the invention is to provide a moistening device wherein the moistening element is housed in a guard to facilitate installation of the moistening element in and removal thereof from the head of the moistening device.

The foregoing objects, advantages, features and results of the present invention, together with various other objects, advantages, features and results thereof which will be evident to those skilled in the postage stamp dispenser art in the light of this disclosure, may be achieved with the exemplary embodiment of the invention described in detail hereinafter and illustrated in the accompanying drawing, in which:

FIG. 1 is a plan view of a postage stamp dispenser which embodies the invention;

FIG. 2 is a longitudinal sectional view of the dispenser which is taken along the arrowed line 2—2 of FIG. 1;

FIGS. 3 and 4 are end views of the dispenser, as viewed from the right end of FIG. 1, respectively showing the dispenser in its static and cutting positions;

FIG. 5 is a transverse sectional view taken along the arrowed line 5—5 of FIG. 2;

FIG. 6 is an exploded perspective view on a reduced scale showing the major components of the dispenser;

and

FIG. 7 is a fragmentary sectional view duplicating a portion of FIG. 2 with parts removed for clarity.

Considering the postage stamp dispenser of the invention generally, it includes a housing 10 comprising generally trough-shaped base and cover members 12 and 14 which are pivotally interconnected and which are held in assembled relation by a moistening device or member 16. Thus, as best shown in FIG. 6, the dispenser includes three major components, viz., the base member 12, the cover member 14 and the moistening device 16.

Considering the manner in which the base and cover members 12 and 14 are pivotally interconnected, the base member fits into the cover member and is provided adjacent one end thereof with transversely spaced, aligned pins 18 preferably formed integrally with the base member and respectively insertable into transversely spaced, aligned slots or grooves 20 in opposite side walls of the cover member. The grooves 20 have closed upper ends and slope downwardly from their upper ends to their lower ends in a direction generally toward the moistening device 16. Consequently, when the moistening device 16 is assembled with the base and cover members 12 and 14, as shown in FIG. 1, the pins 18 are in the grooves 20 and after, it prevents withdrawal of the pins 18 from the grooves 20, which is an important feature.

The base member 12 is provided with a transverse partition 22 which divides it into chambers or compartments 24 and 26, the former being adjacent the end of the base member to which the cover member 14 is connected and the latter being adjacent the opposite end thereof. The chamber 24 is adapted to receive therein a postage stamp roll 28 comprising a coiled postage stamp strip 30. The cover member 14 is provided therein with a discharge passageway 32 for the strip 30, such passageway having an inlet end 34 in communication with the roll chamber 24 and having an outlet end 36 formed in and extending through an external, end wall of the cover member 14 located at the end of the cover member opposite the end thereof which is pivotally connected to the base member 12. Preferably, the inlet end 34 of the passageway 32 diverges toward the roll chamber 24 to facilitate insertion of the end of the strip 30.

The passageway 32 is of arcuate cross section, the cross section of the passageway being substantially flat at the inlet end 34 thereof and becoming progressively more arcuate toward the outlet end 36 thereof. This progressively increasing arcuateness of the passageway 32 may readily be seen by comparing the cross section of the passageway which is visible in FIG. 5, with the outlet end 36 of the passageway which is visible in FIGS. 3 and 4. The effect of the arcuate cross section of the passageway 32 is to curl the strip 30 in the transverse direction, as will be apparent from FIG. 2 of the drawings. Such transverse curling of the strip 30 provides it, in effect, with the cross sectional configuration of a longitudinal strip of a conical shell, thereby stiffening the strip and providing it with substantial resistance to buckling under the influence of various forces applied thereto, which is an important feature of the invention.

The passageway 32 includes an inner wall 40 formed by an element 42 disposed within and suitably secured to the cover member 14, and includes an outer wall 44 formed by the top wall of the cover member. The outer wall 44 of the passageway 32 is provided therein with a longitudinally elongated window 46 through which a thumb or finger of the user may be inserted into engagement with the strip 30 to propel the strip through the passageway and out the outlet end 36 thereof. The upper surface of the inner wall 40, which is engaged by the adhesive coated side of the strip 30, is provided with longitudinal ribs 48, FIG. 1, on which the adhesive coated side of the strip slides. The ribs 48 minimize the area of contact between the strip 30 and the inner wall 40 of the passageway 32 to minimize friction, which is an important feature. It might be pointed out that while the ribs 48 normally would be visible in FIG. 5 of the drawing, they have not been shown in FIG. 5 for the sake of simplicity.

The upper surface of the inner wall 40 of the passageway 32 is also provided with two transverse rows of projections 50 which, upon pressing of the strip 30 downwardly, are insertable into the perforations, not shown, of the transverse rows of perforations formed in the strip and separating the stamps thereof from each other. The two rows of projections 50 are spaced apart the same distance as the rows of perforations in the strip, and further, each row of projections 50 nearest the outer surface of the end wall 39 of the cover member 14 is spaced therefrom the same distance as the spacing between rows of perforations in the strip. Therefore, when two rows of perforations in the strip 30 are in register with the two rows of projections 50, an adjacent row of perforations in the strip is aligned with the outer surface of the end wall 38 of the cover member 14 to properly locate same relative
a cutting means to be described hereinafter. The tips of the projections 50 are flush with the tops of the ribs 48, the latter being cut away around the projections, so that the projections do not interfere with sliding movement of the strip 30.

It will thus be apparent that the transverse rows of projections 50 serve as an indexing or registering means for properly positioning the strip 30 for cutting a stamp therefrom, these rows of projections providing a tactile response since registry of rows of perforations therewith is sensed by feel. The dispenser also includes visual indexing means comprising two transverse rows of projections 52, or other indicia, formed on the upper surface of the outer wall 44 of the passageway 32, i.e., on the upper surface of the cover member 14, in alignment with the respective rows of projections 50. As will be apparent, the user may index the strip 30 by eye by aligning the rows of perforations therein with the rows of projections 52.

The base and cover members 12 and 14 are biased apart by a spring means which is shown as comprising a U-shaped spring 54 disposed between and engaging the base and cover members. More specifically, the spring 54 includes an upper leaf 56 and the edges of which, as best shown in FIG. 5, are seated against the under side of the inner wall 40 of the passageway 32. The element 42 which forms the inner wall 40 of the passageway 32 is provided with a pair of transversely spaced, aligned lugs 58, FIGS. 2 and 5, which engage the under side of the upper leaf 56 and which hold the edges thereof in engagement with the under side of the inner passageway wall 40. The upper leaf 56 of the spring 54 is further secured in position by a stud 60 forming part of the element 42 and extending downwardly from the inner passageway wall 40 into a suitable opening in the upper leaf 56.

The U-shaped spring 54 includes a lower leaf 62 having a free end 64 which is slidable on an upper surface 66 of an end wall 68 of the base member 12. As will be apparent, when a downward force is applied to the cover member 14, the spring 54 flexes and the free end 64 of the lower leaf 62 slides on the surface 66 to permit downward pivoting of the cover member relative to the base member. Upon releasing the force mentioned, the spring 54 pivots the cover member 14 upwardly relative to the base member.

As will be described hereinafter, the moistening device 16 limits upward pivotal movement of the cover member 14 relative to the base member 12 under the influence of the spring 54.

The dispenser of the invention includes a knife 70 slidably engaging the outer surface of the end wall 38 of the cover member 14 and adapted to shear off a stamp from the strip 30 along a transverse row of perforations in the strip when such row is brought into alignment with the outer surface of the end wall 38 by the indexing means formed by the projections 50 or 52 in the manner hereinafter described.

The knife 70 is seated against the upper surface 66 of the end wall 68 of the base member 12 so that downward pivoting of the cover member 14 relative to the base member results, in effect, in movement of the knife across the outlet end 56 of the passageway 32. As being understood that, actually, the outlet end of the passageway is moved downwardly relative to the knife upon downward pivoting of the cover member. Preferably, the knife 70 is formed integrally with the spring 54, the knife projecting upwardly from the free end 64 of the lower leaf 62 of the spring 54. A prominent feature of the invention is that the knife 70 cuts the strip 30 at three points simultaneously, viz., at the edges of the strip and at the center thereof. To accomplish this, the knife 70 is provided with a central cutting point, or central tapered cutting edge, 72 and two cutting edges 74 of the lateral central cutting edge. The action of the knife 70 will be clear from FIG. 4 of the drawings, it being shown therein that the edges 74 of the knife 70 and the central cutting point 72 thereof engage the strip substantially simultaneously. The result is a clean cut with a minimum tendency to buckle the curved strip.

The dispenser also includes a backup means 76 engageable with the convex side of the strip 30 adjacent and outwardly from the path of the knife 70. This backup means comprises two horn-like elements formed integrally with the cover member 14 and spaced outwardly from the end wall 38 of the cover member a distance slightly greater than the thickness of the knife 70, the knife being insertable between the end wall 38 and the elements 76. The latter are provided with arcuate lower surfaces 78 aligned with the upper edge of the outlet end 36 of the passageway 32 and engageable with the convex upper surface of the strip 30. Thus, the lower surfaces 79 of the elements 76 back up the strip 30 in cooperation with the upper edge of the outlet end 36 of the passageway 32, to prevent distortion of the strip when it is engaged by the knife 70.

Considering the moistening device 16, it includes a head 80 provided with a locking means, having the form of a cylindrical skirt 82, for locking the cover member 14 to the base member 12 in a manner preventing withdrawal of the pivot pins 18 from the grooves 20 and in a manner permitting the hereinbefore-described pivotal movement of the cover member relative to the base member. The cylindrical locking skirt 82 is disposed in a complementary hole 84 in an end wall 86 of the cover member 14 below the end wall 38 thereof, the skirt 82 making a friction fit with the periphery of the hole 84. A key 88 on the skirt 82 fits into a keyway 90 in the end wall 86 to properly orient the moistening device 16. The locking skirt 82 also extends into a vertical slot 92 in the end wall 68 of the base member 12 and is movable vertically therein to permit the hereinbefore-described pivotal movement of the base member 12 relative to the cover member 14. As will be apparent, the locking skirt 82 is engageable with the upper end of the slot 92 to prevent separation of the base and cover members 12 and 14 so as to prevent withdrawal of the pivot pins 18 from the grooves 20. However, the base and cover members 12 and 14 may be separated readily by detaching the moistening device 16 from the base and cover members.

Considering the moistening device 16 in more detail, it includes a moistening element 94 formed of a material capable of absorbing water and capable of conducting water by capillary action in the manner of a wick. For example, the moistening element 94 may be made of felt.

The moistening element 94 is disposed in a complementary guard 96 which is generally U-shaped in side elevation and which covers opposite sides of the moistening element to confine and protect same. The guard 96, with the moistening element 94 therein, is insertable into a recess 98 in the head 90, the guard having thereon a detent 100 which is engageable with one side of a bore 102 in the head to retain the guard in its recess.

The bore 102 is formed by a cylindrical skirt 104 which is concentric with and spaced radially inwardly from the cylindrical locking skirt 82, the skirt 104 being adapted to have telescoped thereover the neck of a water container 106. As will be apparent from FIG. 2 of the drawing, the neck of the water container 106 is disposed between the skirts 82 and 104. While the water container 106 may be connected to the skirt 104 in other ways, it is preferably merely telescoped thereover with a friction fit. For this purpose, the water container 106 may be made of a slightly stretchable plastic material, such as polyethylene, if desired, although it may be rigid also.

Water from the water container 106 is conducted to the moistening element 94 through the bore 102 and through one or more openings 108 in the guard 96.

When the moistening device 16 is assembled with the base and cover members 12 and 14, the water container 106 is disposed in the chamber or compartment 26 in
the base member 12, being insertable therein through the hole 54 and the slot 58. Preferably, the water container 106 slopes downwardly slightly toward the cylindrical skirt 104 when the cover member 14 is in its normal, i.e., uppermost position so that water reaches the moistening element 94 even with a relatively low water level in the water container. Furthermore, since the moistening device 16 moves with the cover member 14 when the later is pivoted downwardly relative to the base member 12, this results in further tipping of the water container 106 toward the skirt 104 to insure that water will reach the moistening element 94 even with a low water level in the water container.

 Portions of the moistening element 94 and the guard 96 project upwardly above the head 88 and the uppermost portion of the moistening element projects upwardly above the guard 96 for contact with the adhesive coated side of the strip 30. The exposed portion of the moistening element 94 is provided with an arcuate moistening surface 110 which is engageable with the adhesive coated side of the strip 30 and which conforms in curvature to the curvature of the adhesive coated side of the strip which is produced by the arcuate passageway 32, whereby uniform moistening of the adhesive coated side of the strip is achieved as it moves relative to the moistening surface 110.

The portions of the moistening element 94 and the guard 96 which project above the head 88 are bent toward the end wall 58 of the cover member 14 so as to incline the moistening surface 110 outwardly away from the outlet end 56 of the passageway 32 and toward the path of the strip 30. With such a sloping or inclined moistening surface 110, any tendency of the leading end of the strip 30 to hang up thereon is avoided since the moistening surface 110, if disposed in a position blocking the path of the strip, merely cams the strip upwardly, as viewed in the drawing, so that it rides up and over the moistening surface. Thus, any tendency to jam the strip 30 is prevented, which is an important feature.

Another feature of the invention resides in providing the water container 106 with an elongated, handle-like configuration. This permits the water container 106 to be utilized as a handle so that the moistening device 16 may be employed separately from the dispenser of the invention to moisten stamps, labels, and the like.

It is thought that the operation of the dispenser of the invention will be clear from the foregoing description thereof. Consequently, a specific explanation of the operation of the dispenser is unnecessary.

While an exemplary embodiment of the invention has been disclosed herein for purposes of illustration, it will be understood that various changes, modifications and substitutions may be incorporated in such embodiment without departing from the spirit of the invention as defined by the claims which follow.

We claim:

1. In a device for dispensing stamps from a strip coiled into a roll and coated with a water soluble adhesive on one side, the combination of: a housing including two housing members and provided with a chamber therein for the roll, one of said housing members being provided therein with a passageway for the strip which has an inlet end in communication with said chamber and an outlet end extending through said one housing member to the exterior of said housing at one end thereof; pivot means interconnecting said housing members at the opposite end of said housing; spring means engaging said housing members and biasing same apart; and moistening means carried by said housing at said one end thereof for moistening the adhesive coated side of the strip as it is moved from said outlet end of said passageway, said moistening means including locating means engageable with said housing members for limiting movement of said housing members apart under the influence of said spring means, said one housing member having a hole therein at said one end of said housing and the other of said housing members having a slot therein at said one end of said housing and registering with said hole, said locating means on said moistening means being disposed in said hole and said slot.

2. In a device for dispensing stamps from a strip coiled into a roll and coated with a water soluble adhesive on one side, the combination of: a housing including two housing members and provided with a chamber therein for the roll, one of said housing members being provided therein with a passageway for the strip which has an inlet end in communication with said chamber and an outlet end extending through said one housing member to the exterior of said housing at one end thereof; pivot means interconnecting said housing members at the opposite end of said housing; spring means engaging said housing members and biasing same apart; and moistening means carried by said housing at said one end thereof for moistening the adhesive coated side of the strip as it is moved from said outlet end of said passageway, said moistening means including locating means engageable with said housing members for limiting movement of said housing members apart under the influence of said spring means, said one housing member having a hole therein at said one end of said housing and the other of said housing members having a slot therein at said one end of said housing and registering with said hole, said locating means on said moistening means being disposed in said hole and said slot, said moistening means including a water container carried by said locking means and disposed within said housing being provided therein with a passageway through which has an inlet end in communication with the first chamber mentioned and which has an outlet end extending through said other housing member at said other end of said housing; spring means engaging said housing members for biasing same apart; a knife carried by said one housing member and moveable across said outlet end of said passageway in response to pivotal movement of said housing members away from each other under the influence of said spring means, and including a water container carried by said locking means and communicating with said moistening element and disposed within said other chamber in said one housing member.

3. In a device for dispensing stamps from a strip coiled into a roll and coated on one side with a water soluble adhesive, the combination of: a housing including two housing members and provided with a chamber therein for the roll, one of said housing members being provided therein with a passageway for the strip which has an inlet end in communication with said chamber and an outlet end extending through said one housing member to the exterior of said housing at one end thereof; pivot means interconnecting said housing members at the opposite end of said housing; spring means engaging said housing members and biasing same apart; and moistening means carried by said housing at said one end thereof for moistening the adhesive coated side of the strip as it is moved from said outlet end of said passageway, said moistening means including locating means engageable with said housing members for limiting movement of said housing members apart under the influence of said spring means, said one housing member having a hole therein at said one end of said housing and the other of said housing members having a slot therein at said one end of said housing and registering with said hole, said locating means on said moistening means being disposed in said hole and said slot, said moistening means including a water container carried by said locking means and disposed within said housing being provided therein with a passageway through which has an inlet end in communication with the first chamber mentioned and which has an outlet end extending through said other housing member at said other end of said housing; spring means engaging said housing members for biasing same apart; a knife carried by said one housing member and moveable across said outlet end of said passageway in response to pivotal movement of said housing members away from each other under the influence of said spring means, and including a water container carried by said locking means and communicating with said moistening element and disposed within said other chamber in said one housing member.

4. In a device for dispensing stamps from a strip coiled into a roll and coated on one side with a water soluble adhesive, the combination of: a housing including two housing members and provided with a chamber therein for the roll, one of said housing members being provided therein with a passageway for the strip which has an inlet end in communication with said chamber and an outlet end extending through said one housing member to the exterior of said housing at one end thereof; pivot means interconnecting said housing members at the opposite end of said housing; spring means engaging said housing members and biasing same apart; and moistening means carried by said housing at said one end thereof for moistening the adhesive coated side of the strip as it is moved from said outlet end of said passageway, said moistening means including locating means engageable with said housing members for limiting movement of said housing members apart under the influence of said spring means, said one housing member having a hole therein at said one end of said housing and the other of said housing members having a slot therein at said one end of said housing and registering with said hole, said locating means on said moistening means being disposed in said hole and said slot, said moistening means including a water container carried by said locking means and disposed within said housing being provided therein with a passageway through which has an inlet end in communication with the first chamber mentioned and which has an outlet end extending through said other housing member at said other end of said housing; spring means engaging said housing members for biasing same apart; a knife carried
by said one housing member and movable across said outlet end of said passageway in response to pivotal movement of said housing members toward each other to cut the strip; and moistening means on said housing at said other end thereof for moistening the adhesive coated side of the strip, said moistening means including a moistening element aligned with said outlet end of said passageway, including locking means for limiting pivotal movement of said housing members away from each other under the influence of said spring means, and including a water container carried by said locking means and communicating with said moistening element and disposed within said other chamber in said one housing member.

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